



PRESSKIT ALMERE

Almere

Almere is the youngest city in the Netherlands, conveniently located at the heart of the country. Today it's home to more than 200,000 residents, making it the eighth most populous city in the Netherlands.

Designed as a green city for the future, Almere is the ideal host of the Floriade Expo 2022, an international exhibition and garden festival that takes place in the Netherlands every 10 years. The theme of the upcoming edition is 'Growing Green Cities', reflecting the core value of Almere as a 'garden city' – a diverse environment with a variety of urban cores of different sizes and characters, where everyone lives close to large areas of nature and greenery, enjoying water-rich surroundings, and where public transport and cycling are given priority in public space. That's why Almere and the Floriade are the perfect fit.



A city in harmony with water

Construction of Almere began some 45 years ago, on land that had been freshly reclaimed from the former Zuiderzee. Hidden proof of this can be found in 27 shipwrecks that have so far been discovered around the region, the oldest of which dates from the 15th century.

Today, Almere has a total surface area of 250 km², lying on average between two and five metres below sea level – and half of its surface area is actually water. The city's coastline stretches around for 42 kilometres and there are nine city beaches. A sailing route even flows right through the heart of the city, starting at the Gooimeer lake and ending at the Markermeer, via the Weerwater and Noorderplassen lakes. And with so much water in and around the city, it's no surprise that Almere has more than 800 bridges – twice as many as Venice. Its newest bridges have been constructed using completely circular principles.



New nature

Almere is surrounded by five distinct nature reserves: Oostvaardersplassen, Lepelaarplassen, Pampushout, Vroege Vogelbos and Boswachterij Almeerderhout. Oostvaardersplassen and Lepelaarplassen actually form part of the newest national park in the Netherlands: Nieuw Land National Park.

Oostvaardersplassen is Almere's wild back garden, sometimes referred to as the 'savannah of the north'. This special marshland terrain is roamed by foxes, red deer, Heck cattle and Konik horses. It's also internationally renowned as a paradise for birds, attracting species such as great egrets, bitterns, kingfishers, bearded reedlings, reed buntings and the huge, rare white-tailed eagle. The Lepelaarplassen is a nearby clay swamp environment, transformed into a protected wetlands nature reserve for marsh and sea birds. It has also become an important breeding territory for meadow-breeding shorebirds and ducks.



Innovative living

Almere is no ordinary urban space. As well as its water and nature, the city is a home to a variety of extraordinary residential areas. In Almere Poort, for example, the neighbourhood known as Duin (the Dutch word for dune) offers housing amidst a man-made dune landscape. Alongside the dunes – some up to 10 metres high – are stretches of forest, a lakeside boulevard, a wonderful sandy beach with a marina, beach bars, and the largest catamaran beach in the Netherlands.



On the other side of the city is Oosterwold. This lusciously green agricultural area between Almere and the municipality of Zeewolde is being developed by the residents themselves – sometimes alone, or in collaboration with others, but always as sustainably and self-sufficiently as possible. Not only are they taking responsibility for their own homes, businesses and amenities, but also the roads, water management and public space. Part of each plot is designated to be used for sustainable urban agriculture.



Almere Centrum

At the heart of the city is Almere Centrum, a perfect destination for a day of shopping and fun. As it is situated close to the Floriade grounds, there will be plenty of opportunities for visitors to enjoy complementary activities and see more of the city.

Home to more than 400 shops, it's no surprise that Almere Centrum was voted 'best city centre' of the Netherlands. All the big high-street fashion brands are present: ZARA, Primark, Superdry, Pull&Bear and H&M. But there's also space for specialist shops like

KIKO Milano, Amac and Jeans Centre.

When it's time to refuel, the public squares of the Grote Markt and Belfort are where to find a wide variety of cafés and dining options. The centre also has a multiplex cinema, a theatre overlooking the Weerwater lake, and an impressive public library.

Almere's urban landscape is equally appealing, designed by international architects including Rem Koolhaas. The result is a welcoming, car-free city centre that's just a 20- to 30-minute drive from Amsterdam or Utrecht – with an ample selection of parking garages right around and even under the shopping area. It's also easily accessible by train, with the city's main train station situated at the edge of the shopping area.

The shops, cafés and restaurants of Almere's city centre are open seven days a week.



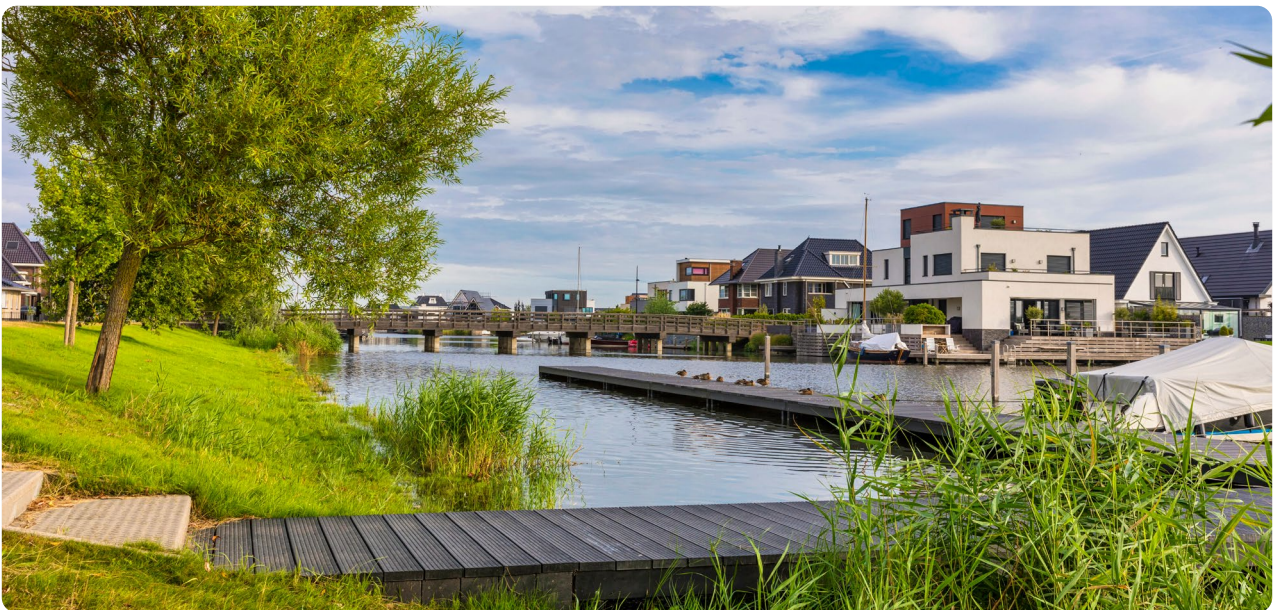
An open-air architecture museum

Almere is often referred to as an open-air architecture museum. The Flores residential tower and the new home of the Aeres University of Applied Sciences will be a must-see for architecture fans. And the same can be said for the city centre, where some of the world's most famous architects have showcased their imagination and talent in an area that is less than one square kilometre in size.

In 1994, OMA, the research and design agency of Dutch architect Rem Koolhaas, won a competition to design Almere's new city centre. In turn, Koolhaas approached various high-profile architects and agencies whose innovative designs had been built around the world. The various components of his urban master plan were finalised by renowned names such as René van Zuuk, Herman Hertzberger, Cees Dam, SANAA, Claus en Kaan Architecten, Christian de Portzamparc and Will Alsop.



OMA itself has earned worldwide attention for icons like the CCTV building in Beijing; British architect Will Alsop, who designed the Urban Entertainment Centre in Almere, was famous for buildings like the Sharpe Centre for Design at the Ontario College of Art and Design; and Almere resident René van Zuuk is responsible for a variety of striking designs in the city, and also created ARCAM in Amsterdam (now known as the Amsterdam Centre for Architecture). And there are many more impressive examples in this small central area, designed by architects that have worked in a wide range of countries



– from France, Germany and the UK to Ethiopia and Indonesia. All this makes Almere Centrum the ideal destination for fans of design and architecture.

Other parts of Almere also have exceptional buildings and neighbourhoods, and archi-

itecture fans from all over the world know to seek out the young city's many sides. For example, in the Eilandenbuurt in Almere-Buiten, a special project called 'Gewild Wonen' ('Purposeful Living') was launched to coincide with the Bouw-RAI exhibition in 2001. The result was an experimental neighbourhood featuring robust and distinct housing designs that overflow with character. The Regenboogbuurt is home to the Rode Donders (Red Devils), three striking red residential towers designed by Liesbeth van der Pol. And even Almere's sheep are entitled to a spectacular roof over their heads at the Schaapskooi in the Vroege Vogelbos – this architectural masterpiece won the first prize in the 'Pleasure' category at the World Architecture Festival.

Almere has another three experimental neighbourhoods that grew from design competitions. De Fantasie was built in 1982 and its free-ranging ideas reflect the fact that the architects did not have to consider building regulations or other possible obstacles. And beside the Noorderplassen lake you'll find De Realiteit and De Eenvoud. Here, all of the inventive solutions found for energy saving and recycling are still very much up to date.

And the story isn't finished yet. Almere will continue to develop over the coming years, with a wide variety of architectural talents ready and willing to create inspired designs and ideas for the New Town.

A busy events calendar

A wide variety of events and festivals are held in Almere every year – for locals, visitors from other cities and international tourists. Look out for sport, music festivals, sustainability events, funfairs, arts & culture exhibitions and events, neighbourhood gatherings and exuberant national festivities... as our motto states, 'everything is possible in Almere'. The city's central location, excellent accessibility, the availability of space and many different types of locations – from squares to waterside venues – are precisely why Almere is such an attractive events host. And with the Floriade Expo 2022 fast approaching, Almere is gearing up to host an iconic event of international renown that will weave together the past, present and future of our young city.

Learn more: www.visitalmere.com/en

Note for the editor

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